

## Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----014094 081344Z /41

O 081245Z SEP 78  
FM AMEMBASSY PRETORIA  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 2451  
INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY LAGOS IMMEDIATE  
AMEMBASSY LONDON IMMEDIATE  
USMISSION USUN NEW YORK IMMEDIATE

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 PRETORIA 5292

EXDIS

FROM LOW

E.O.O. 11652: GDS  
TAGS: PDEV, PINT, RH  
SUBJECT: RHODESIA: CONVERSATION WITH MUGABE

1. SUMMARY: MUGABE VENTED HIS ANGER AT NKOMO AND DAVID OWEN FOR SEEKING TO LEAD HIM BLINDFOLDED INTO A MEETING HE WOULD NEVER AGREE TO. IT HAD BEEN ALL ALONG ESTABLISHED THAT ANY NEGOTIATIONS SHOULD BE WITH THE BRITISH AND HE WOULD NOT ACCEPT ANYTHING ELSE. OWEN WAS TRYING TO IMPOSE NKOMO AND NEITHER HE NOR SITHOLE OR MUZOREWA WOULD ACCEPT THIS. MUGABE HAS USED THE REVELATION OF THE SECRET MEETING TO RESIST ATTEMPTS TO MAKE HIM ACCEPT THE SECOND JOB IN THE PF AND FEELS THAT HE HAS BEEN VINDICATED BY FRONTLINE SUPPORT. HE OBVIOUSLY THINKS HE HAS COME OUT OF THE AFFAIR CONSIDERABLY STRENGTHENED AT THE EXPENSE OF NKOMO. END SUMMARY.

2. GRAHAM AND I, AMBASSADOR LEWEN, AND CHARGE MCGUIRE  
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MET FOR ABOUT AN HOUR AND A HALF WITH MUGABE, TEKERE, HURIMBO MEYA, AND HOVE OF ZANU. THE CONVERSATION WAS AN INTERESTING ONE, WITH MOMENTS OF HEATED EXCHANGE, BUT FOR THE MOST PART IT WAS A MORE FRANK AND RELAXED ATMOSPHERE THAN DURING PREVIOUS MEETINGS BETWEEN US.

3. WE OUTLINED EVENTS AS WE SAW THEM SINCE WE HAD LAST

MET WITH MUGABE IN MAPUTO IN EARLY JULY, UNDERLINING OUR CONTINUING EFFORTS TO ORGANIZE AN ALL-PARTIES MEETING, BUT NOTING THAT THE ATMOSPHERE INSIDE RHODESIA AT THE MOMENT WAS NOT AUSPICIOUS FOR EARLY AGREEMENT TO CONVENE ONE. MUGABE DESCRIBED RECENT EVENTS TO US IN GREAT DETAIL AND AT SOME LENGTH. HE SAID HE AND NKOMO HAD AGREED IN KHARTOUM THAT THE PF WOULD ONLY MEET SMITH IN THE PRESENCE OF THE BRITISH, WITH WHOM THEY CONTINUE TO INSIST THEY ARE NEGOTIATING FOR MAJORITY RULE AND INDEPENDENCE. WHILE EVERYONE ELSE SEEMED TO KNOW WHAT WAS GOING ON, HE WAS LEFT IN IGNORANCE OF THE PLANS. MUGABE SAID HE LOOKS LIKE A SHAKESPEAREAN FOOL. HE WAS LAUNCHED INTO AN ORBIT WHICH PRESUMABLY WAS TO END IN A PRIVATE MEETING WITH SMITH, WITHOUT KNOWING IT AND WITHOUT HAVING A VOICE IN THE DIRECTION IT WAS TAKING. HE RESENTED THE MANNER IN WHICH HE WAS INFORMED OF WHAT WAS GOING ON. NKOMO HAD ASKED OBASANJO TO TELL HIM, WHILE OWEN (AND VANCE, TEKERE ADDED) REMAINED GLUED TO HIS TELEPHONE AWAITING THE RESULTS. THEN HE WAS TO GO TO LUSAKA AND A FEW DAYS LATER BE BROUGHT ALONG BY NKOMO TO A MEETING WITH SMITH. THIS WAS UNACCEPTABLE TO HIM. IF SMITH WAS PREPARED TO SURRENDER TO THE PATRIOTIC FRONT IN PRIVATE WHY SHOULD HE NOT BE WILLING TO DO SO WITH THE BRITISH PRESENT? (GRAHAM INTERJECTED, "BECAUSE HE HATES US AS MUCH AS YOU.") ZANU WAS NOT PREPARED FOR THIS KIND OF A MEETING AND IT HAD NOT BEEN AGREED ON AHEAD

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OF TIME. NKOMO WAS PLAYING A DOUBLE GAME. THE FRONTLINE STATES ALSO WERE TAKEN ABACK WHEN THEY LEARNED. AS FAR AS ZANU IS CONCERNED, IT STILL INSISTS THAT TALKS CONTINUE ON THE BASIS OF THE AAP. IT HAS NEVER REFUSED TO NEGOTIATE OR OBJECTED TO FURTHER TALKS AS OWEN IMPLIED IN HIS SPEECH TO PARLIAMENT ON AUGUST 2. MUGABE READ EXCERPTS FROM THAT SPEECH IN WHICH OWEN SAID THAT AN ELEMENT OF THE PF OPPOSED NEGOTIATIONS. HE SAID THIS WAS OBVIOUSLY AIMED AT HIM AND HE TOOK STRONG EXCEPTION TO IT, OTHER STATEMENTS BY OWEN, AND THE "DOUBLE GAME" WHICH OWEN WAS PLAYING IN SUPPORTING NKOMO: WHY, MUGABE ASKED, SHOULD DEREK ROBINSON, THE "HEAD" OF THE RHODESIAN SECRET POLICE, BE PERMITTED INTO THE UK?

4. MUGABE SAYS THAT NKOMO WANTS TO DITCH SITHOLE AND MUZOREWA. ZANU ONLY WANTS TO DITCH SMITH. OWEN ALSO SEEMS TO WANT TO CHOOSE THE PRESIDENT OF AN INDEPENDENT ZIMBABWE. HE SAYS THAT NKOMO IS THE FATHER-FIGURE OF THE PEOPLE. "ON THIS, SITHOLE, MUZOREWA, AND I AGREE. I CANNOT ACCEPT NKOMO AS OUR LEADER", SAID MUGABE.

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 PRETORIA 5292

EXDIS

FROM LOW

5. WE INSISTED THAT WE WERE NOT INVOLVED IN SETTING UP  
THE MEETINGS BETWEEN NKOMO AND SMITH, THOUGH WE DID NOT  
CRITICIZE IT. WE ADMITTED TO HAVING BEEN AWARE OF THE  
MEETINGS A FEW DAYS BEFORE THEY OCCURRED, AND WE CHALLENGED  
THE INFORMATION  
THAT VANCE AND OWEN HAD BEEN GLUED TO THEIR  
TELEPHONES AWAITING THE RESULTS OF THE MEETING.

6. WE DISCUSSED POSSIBLE DATES AND TIMES FOR AN ALL-PARTIES  
MEETING. MUGABE REFUSED TO ATTEND ANY MEETING HELD IN EITHER  
MALAWI OR KENYA. AS FOR MAURITIUS, HE FINALLY SAID HE HAD  
NO OBJECTION TO IT, BUT QUALIFIED THAT BY SAYING HE HAD NOT  
YET STUDIED IT THOROUGHLY. HE SAID HE WOULD BE READY  
TO GO TO A MEETING WHENEVER IT WAS CALLED. GRAHAM ASKED  
ABOUT MID-OCTOBER, AND MUGABE SAID HE THOUGHT THAT WOULD BE  
ALL RIGHT.

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7. GRAHAM GAVE MUGABE A SHORTENED VERSION OF OPTION B.

THE ZANU LEADER STUDIED IT CAREFULLY, OBJECTING TO REFERENCE IN IT TO THE "EXECUTIVE COUNCIL", WHICH HE SAID WAS GIVING LEGITIMACY TO THE PRESENT SMITH REGIME. WE EXPLAINED THAT THIS WAS SIMPLY AN INFORMAL DRAFT AND NOTHING WAS INTENDED BY DESIGNATING THE SALSIBURY GROUP IN THIS FASHION. MUGABE'S GENERAL RECEPTION OF THE OPTION, HOWEVER, WAS A THOUGHTFUL AND INTERESTED ONE.

8. BOTH MUGABE AND TEKERE COMPLAINED THAT WE HAD NOT BEEN KEEPING THEM INFORMED OF EVENTS AS THEY TRANSPIRED. IT HAD BEEN TWO WHOLE MONTHS SINCE WE HAD LAST TALKED TO THEM. WE NOTED THAT WE HAD PASSED A NUMBER OF MESSAGES IN THE INTERVAL AND THAT OUR EFFORTS HAD BEEN DEVOTED TO BRINGING SMITH AND THE SALISBURY GROUP TO A MEETING SINCE MUGABE HAD ALREADY AGREED TO COME. WE PARTED CORDIALLY.

9. COMMENT: MUGABE IS OBVIOUSLY PLEASED WITH THE PRESENT STATE OF AFFAIRS. HE HAS BEEN ABLE TO EMBARRASS NKOMO AND RALLY A FRONTLINE LEADERSHIP ROUND HIMSELF. HE HAS USED THE SECRET NKOMO-SMITH MEETING TO THWART NIGERIAN AND ZAMBIAN EFFORTS TO FORCE HIM TO TAKE A SECONDARY POSITION TO NKOMO IN THE PATRIOTIC FRONT. HE HAS WRAPPED HIMSELF IN THE FLAG OF THE AAP AND SEES THE COURSE OF EVENTS STRENGTHENING HIS POSITION. HE MAY EVEN SEE THE POSSIBILITY OF USING THE RESENTMENT CAUSED BY THE ATTEMPT TO IMPOSE NKOMO AS A MEANS TO ENLIST THE SUPPORT OF SITHOLE AND MUZOREWA AND HIS OWN CAUSE.  
EDMONDSON

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